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6. AN INSTANCE OF FOSTERING IN CAPTIVITY IN THE WESTERN GHATS SQUIRREL, *FUNAMBULUS TRISTRIATUS* WATERHOUSE

The behaviour of fostering was already observed and studied in several rodents (Denenberg *et al.* 1963, Muul 1970, Grota 1973, Ajayi 1975). In all these studies the mother was not exposed simultaneously to her own litter and that of others. In this short communication an instance where a mother Western Ghats Squirrel (*Funambulus tristriatus* Waterhouse) suckled and reared the young ones of another squirrel along with her own is reported.

On 6 April 1978 I collected two young *F. tristriatus* weighing 14.25 g (♂) and 17.5 g (♀) from a nest. Their eyes were yet to be opened. The female had developed only the lower, while the male had both upper and lower incisors. Pelage development was incomplete. From these characters the age of this litter was assessed as approximately 20 days. These young ones were placed in the cage (75 × 30 × 30 cm) of a female *F. tristriatus* which was rearing her own 40-day-old litter. At first the mother squirrel

was little 'aggressive' towards the new comers, but later on she suckled and reared them along with her own litter. Within a week the fostered young ones opened their eyes and increased in body weight to 18.50 and 21.50 g respectively. They were raised by the foster mother until weaning.

Denenberg *et al.* (1963) opined that the longer the mothers had been lactating before being given foster young, the higher was the mortality percentage. In albino rats Denenberg *et al.* (op. cit.) observed that fostering to 5 or 10 day lactating mothers resulted in significant increase in the rate of mortality. In the present study the Western Ghats Squirrel adopted the litter of another female even at 40 days post partum. This phenomenon could be taken advantage of in rearing squirrels in captivity.

The financial assistance received from the CSIR, New Delhi for the conduct of the studies on squirrels is gratefully acknowledged.

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7. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *VANDELEURIA OLERACEA* IN A RURAL RESIDENTIAL HABITAT IN THE DESERT BIOME OF RAJASTHAN

During pest control estimation of rodent population in a village complex near Jodhpur (26°18'N — 73°01'E; mean annual rainfall 366.0 mm), a living specimen of the long-tailed tree mouse, *Vandeleuria oleracea* was captured inside a *Kuchha* hut, feeding upon jaggery in a container in the kitchen. The hut was located in a 3 hectare agricultural land and was surrounded by plantations of Neem, *Azadirachta indica*, Ber, *Zizyphus mauritiana* and citrus. Hitherto, this species has been recorded from several localities in Gujarat (Ellerman 1961) and

Bisalpur (25°7'N, 73°10'E; mean annual rainfall 499.7 mm.) in South-western Rajasthan (Rana 1980).

The present report extends the range of *V. oleracea* further north in the desert biome of Rajasthan, and from a residential/premise which has not been hitherto reported.

We are grateful to Dr. H. S. Mann, Director, CAZRI, Jodhpur and Dr. Ishwar Prakash, Professor of Eminence for providing necessary facilities and encouragement.

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